

B11. Management of Unintentional Degradation (relating to neighbouring land use)

Unfortunately, degradation of natural areas does occur directly, through the unintentional actions of other parties (internal or external) managing or working adjacent to local government-controlled natural areas; and indirectly through poorly designed infrastructure. Potentially damaging activities that occur in areas neighbouring bushland may include:

- mowing/slashing/brush-cutting into bushland edges. These actions have the potential to introduce weeds, destroy native plants, disturb soil and harm native fauna;
- fertilising parkland grass and plants and off-target irrigation which may cause nutrient enrichment issues in natural systems;
- inappropriate landscaping design and/or the inclusion of inappropriate (potentially weedy) plants in landscape design;
- movement of soil near the site boundary or use of the site boundary to store soil or mulch. This has the potential to introduce weeds and pathogens that threaten nearby bushland;
- vehicles parked or driven too close to bushland have the potential to introduce weeds, introduce pathogens, cause disturbance to the soil and damage root systems or fauna living within the soil;
- use of wetlands and swales as stormwater soaks where rubbish, weed seeds and pathogens get flushed in from outside areas; and
- litter and rubbish being blown into natural areas due to inappropriate rubbish collection facilities at surrounding properties, an issue eminent in new housing or industrial development sites.

Local governments may experience related problems internally between divisions such as parks, landscape or operational staff. A classic example is where parks staff responsible for maintaining parkland unintentionally mow further and further into natural areas in an effort to 'tidy' the edges of parkland on the boundary of a bushland reserve. A bollard and 1-2m spray-line can help mowing staff keep on the grass. Spraying out a wide edge also helps stop grass stolons from spreading into the natural area.

Natural area managers are encouraged to review internal communication protocols and coordination of operational works that might have a detrimental impact on natural areas. Attending regular 'Tool Box' meetings to discuss management issues, among all relevant local government units and departments, might be one way of resolving problems.